

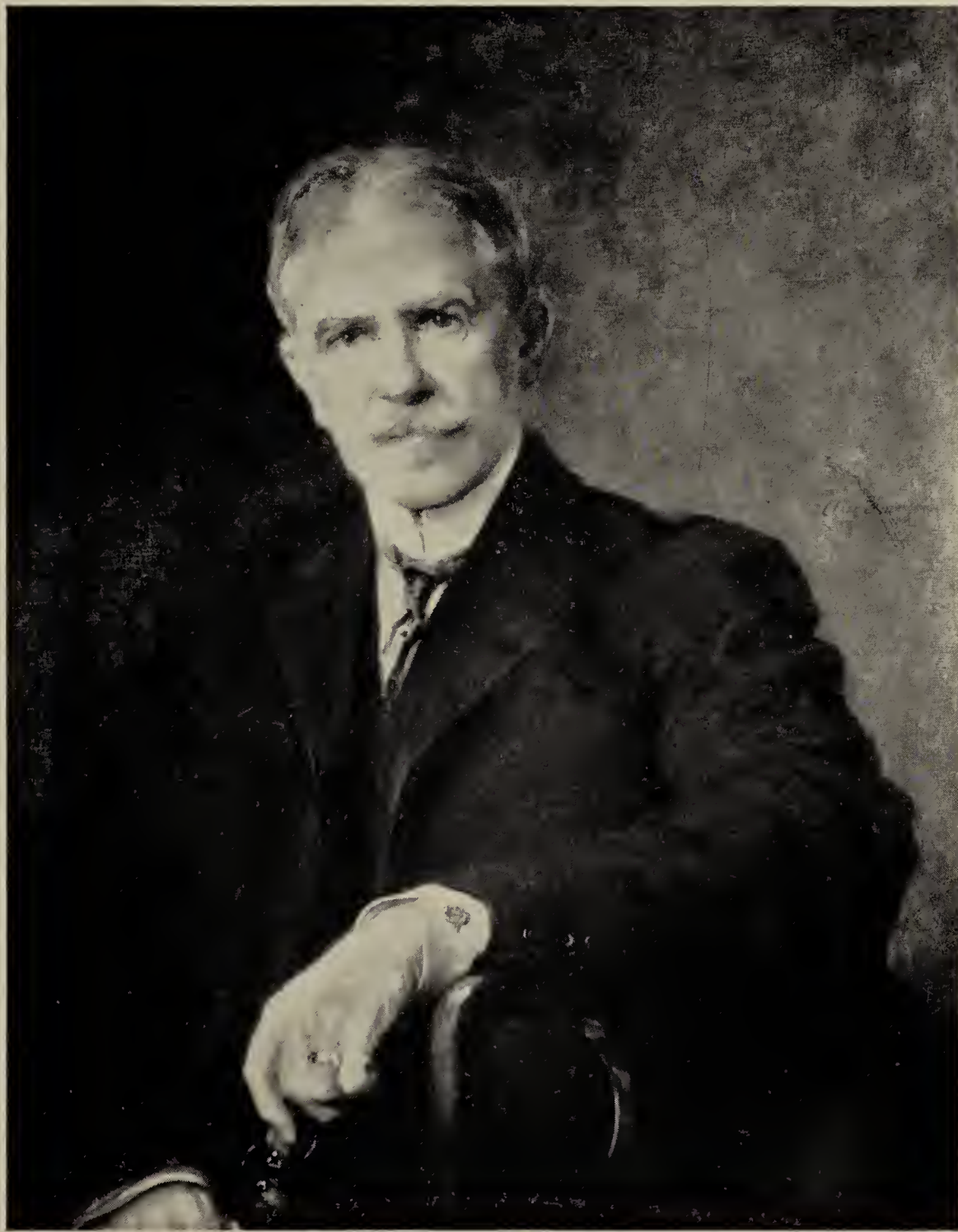
MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

NUMBER 95 A

TOLEDO, OHIO

SEPTEMBER, 1941



ARTHUR J. SECOR



MUSEUM NEWS

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A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD

MR. ARTHUR J. SECOR'S DEATH has been a very heavy blow to this institution as well as a deep personal loss to many of us who knew him over a long period of years. He was a keen collector and gave with an open hand to the Toledo Museum of Art even to the point of stripping the walls of his own home to add to his munificent contributions.

He is represented here by four galleries of paintings of uniformly high quality. Starting with the Barbizon painters, of which there is as comprehensive a representation as any museum can boast, he passed in his later years to the English school of portrait artists, to Rubens, Gilbert Stuart, Inness, David and a catholic list of other well-known men.

From the death of Mr. Libbey until 1932 he was President of this organization, and from then until his death, Chairman of the Board.

Personally he was gentle, considerate of others and beloved by all who knew him. His benefactions were innumerable, many of them individual and secret. He led a life of simplicity, spending almost nothing on himself, that he might have more to give. He loved the great outdoors from which he drew much of his sterling character.

Toledo has lost a really great citizen and this Museum an irreplaceable friend. To his surviving relatives we offer our sincere sympathy. For ourselves we have the deepest sense of irreparable loss.

THE ARTHUR J. SECOR COLLECTION

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART was founded on an idea, that a growing industrial center should offer to every dweller therein the opportunity to experience the joys and delights which come from contemplation of the master works of the great artists and artisans of all ages. To that idea was soon added another, that the Museum could and should be an educational force just as strong as a college or the public schools.

One idea, or even two, does not make a museum. Collections are necessary. The Toledo Museum struggled valiantly for twenty years with temporary exhibitions, a broad educational policy and the slow accumulation of those works which are essential to tell the story of man's cultural and artistic development. First came gifts of a mummified cat from ancient Egypt and a Dutch painting. Then a group of Russian paintings stranded in this country after the Saint Louis Fair, and somewhat later a small but intensely interesting selection of Egyptian antiquities.

With the opening of the new building in 1912 came substantial accretions in the ceramics and Oriental collections and in the establishment of the Scott gallery with its retrospective showing of American painting.

But until 1922 the collections of the Museum were distinctly sketchy, including only, in addition to the groups mentioned above, a number of fine prints, the nucleus of the collection of books and manuscripts, and paintings by a few contemporaries, both American and European. Then Arthur J. Secor took from the walls of his home, while he and Mrs. Secor were still living, his entire collection of French, Dutch and American paintings and gave it to the Museum so that all might share in their enjoyment of it. This event, as a Resolution of the Board of Trustees adopted at the time stated, placed "the permanent collection of the Toledo Museum of Art at one stroke on a par with the other important museums of art in this country." But this was not the end of Mr. Secor's generosity to the Museum, nor did it indicate any lessening of interest upon his part. He continued to collect paintings and to present them to the Museum, and broadened his enthusiasms beyond the confines of the nineteenth century.

Arthur J. Secor lived through the great period of American collecting. True, the acquisitive instinct had made itself manifest even before our national independence, but both the facilities and the funds to compete with European collectors were lacking until comparatively recent times. Toward the end of the nineteenth

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CANAL IN PICARDY

J. B. C. COROT



IN THE AUVERGNE MOUNTAINS

THEODORE ROUSSEAU

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THE QUARRIERS

J. F. MILLET

century these disadvantages were overcome, and the last fifty years has seen the shift of a substantial part of the world's movable art treasures to this country. Of this movement Mr. Secor was a spectator, and in it a participant. He saw the formation of most of the great collections of America, witnessed the passing of many of them from private into public hands, either through gifts to existing museums or the establishment of new ones, followed some to dispersal on the auction block, and was not oblivious to the opportunities which such disposal presented to him in the acquisition of his own treasures. The once great collections of



UNDER THE BIRCHES, EVENING

THEODORE ROUSSEAU

Gould, Williams and Yerkes in this country, of Lord Arundell, Baron Curzon, Hugh Lane, Marczell de Nemes, Baron Nathaniel de Rothschild abroad, and many less known made their contributions to his own growing assemblage.

Whence came his collecting instinct, his love of beauty, it is impossible for us to say and would have been difficult for Mr. Secor to explain. In reminiscing he loved to tell how he was reprimanded, if not chastized, as a boy in school because his mind and hand frequently wandered from more serious studies to drawing. Early in life he travelled abroad, and he spent a considerable time at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. This occasion, which had so broad an influence upon American standards and tastes, must have had its effect upon him. At any rate, he soon became a discriminating buyer of pictures.

It was Mr. Secor's personal predilection as much as the mode of the time which gave direction to his collecting. His enjoyment of art was exceeded only by his love of nature. Among paintings he found particular pleasure in those which depicted the beauties of landscape. Hence he turned early to the works of the Barbizon masters, formed an unexcelled collection thereof.

The Corot entitled Canal in Picardy is one of the gems of this group. Shimmering, misty atmosphere of early morning, the delicate poplars and aspens with their lightly brushed foliage,

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FOREST OF FONTAINEBLEAU

NARCISSE DIAZ

the placing of the figures to lend interest and depth, all are characteristic of the artist, as is the color greyed to harmonies of silvery tones.

From the hand of Rousseau, the artistic leader of the Barbizon school, but one canvas was included in the original gift. Two others were added later, the third being the last of Mr. Secor's many generousities to the Museum. The first of the group, *In the Auvergne Mountains*, is one of the artist's most majestic composi-



THE PARTING DAY

JOSEF ISRAELS

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THE TIBER BELOW PERUGIA

GEORGE INNESS

tions, a work of great serenity, dominated by two masses of foliage, enlivened by lighter shrubbery and animated by cattle. The second, *Under the Birches, Evening*, is a more unusual type of composition, in which pattern of line replaces balance of mass, and shrouding atmosphere of evening supplants clear definition of day. Since coming to the Museum it has twice visited Europe, having been invited to the Burlington House Exhibition of French Art at London in 1932 and to the Masterpieces of French Art showing in



THE SETTING SUN

RALPH A. BLAKELOCK

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THE POOL

ALEXANDER WYANT

Paris in 1937. The third, entitled *Landscape*, depicts a quiet pastoral scene. A peasant has brought his herd to drink from the limpid stream which flows quietly through a wooded landscape.

Unlike other artists who had gathered in Barbizon, Jean François Millet took man rather than nature for the subject of his work. He glorified not the peasant, but the labor which he performed. *The Gleaner*, a sketch from the standing figure in the famous *Gleaners* of the Louvre, is typical of the work by which he is best known. The strength and firmness of the drawing, the weight and mass of the drapery, the solidity of the figure, all are characteristic of his usual style. *The Quarriers*, while lacking, at

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THE MAGNANIMITY OF SCIPIO

G. VAN DEN EECKHOUT

first sight, some of these qualities, shows an artistic development beyond them. The straining effort of the workmen requires more vigor and spontaneity for expression. The same strength and solidity is there, enlivened, almost electrified by free and bold brush strokes, by dashing suggestion of the heavy stone. Its soundness of drawing, brilliance of technique, clarity of color and ease of composition mark it as one of his greatest works.

The Spanish-born Diaz developed a facile landscape style under the influence of Rousseau, and from him acquired a love of the tree not only as an object of natural beauty but as an element of pictorial design. The panel called *Forest of Fontainebleau* shows him at his best. Clean, dark colors contrasted with the light tones of the sky evoke the cool freshness of a shaded wood and trickling stream.

The youngest of the group, Charles François Daubigny, came late to Barbizon from his houseboat studio on the river Oise near Auvers. His paintings, reflecting nature, have a clarity and freshness which foreshadows the Impressionists. Two of his pictures

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LANDSCAPE

JACOB VAN RUISDAEL

are in the Secor collection. In the impressive *Clearing After a Storm*, masses of trees, grasses of the meadow give depth and richness; floating ducks and seated figure add life and interest; while a clear, fresh-washed atmosphere pervades the whole.

A substantial number of Dutch artists were influenced by the Barbizon men in choice of subject as in technique. Patriarch of them all was Josef Israels, most famous and most popular painter of his time and country, admired as greatly in America as in his native land. His frequent portrayal of peasant figures with strong drawing, great solidity and natural attitude, as in *The Parting Day*, gave him the title of "the Dutch Millet."

The group of American paintings in the Secor collection, some of them continuing the Barbizon tradition of love for nature and fidelity to it in representation, forms in itself a section which would be notable in any gallery. In the original gift were two works by George Inness. To them was later added a third, as well as one by Inness' biographer, Elliott Daingerfield, who said of him "In his name the corner stone of American landscape art rests." Inness early learned to draw. He went to Europe, where he neither copied old masters nor studied under living ones; but he was deeply



GIRL AT WINDOW

FERDINAND BOL

impressed by the ideas and the efforts of the Barbizon men. Returning to this country, he did for American landscape art what they had done for European, releasing it from the current microscopic copying of blade of grass and leaf of tree and the overlaying of brown tones which frequently served no purpose other than to thinly veil harsh and unharmonious colors. The Tiber Below Perugia is not only a charming and idyllic view of a broad, peaceful scene, but a delightful souvenir of his Italian travels. In it he

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THE HONORABLE MRS. WATSON

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

has caught the atmosphere of the place as well as he has presented its likeness. The color scheme, though soft, is fresh and clean. An early work, satisfying in itself, it held promise for the future as well. The other canvases from his brush are equally characteristic of varied phases of his work.

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DREAM OF ARCADIA

THOMAS COLE

Ohio-born Alexander Wyant, at first a sign painter, saw some good pictures in Cincinnati, heard of Inness, went to him for instruction, went on to Europe, where he was carried away by the art of Constable and Turner. With Inness and Homer Martin, Wyant forms the great trio of American landscapists of the last half of the nineteenth century. *The Pool*, small though it is, is a most impressive work, far more compelling than many a larger one. Broadly painted, it has a clarity of tone combined with a richness of color that marks it as a masterpiece. *The Cloudy Day*, a more sizable canvas, shows greater analogy to the Barbizon school. A study of flat landscape, dominated by a single tree in the foreground, a group of trees receding at the right, its atmospheric qualities are a mark of the new era in American landscape painting.

The Setting Sun from the strange, demented talent of Ralph Blakelock is of particular interest in our Museum for comparison with his *Moonlight* in the Scott Gallery. For Blakelock composed in two tones, responding to the deep notes of orange-reds and the more vibrant blues, but nearly always with light seen only through deepest shadow, suggestive at least of his own troubled outlook upon life.

When Mr. Secor gave this first group of pictures to the Museum he closed a chapter in his own history of collecting. He



COUNTESS OF ARUNDELL

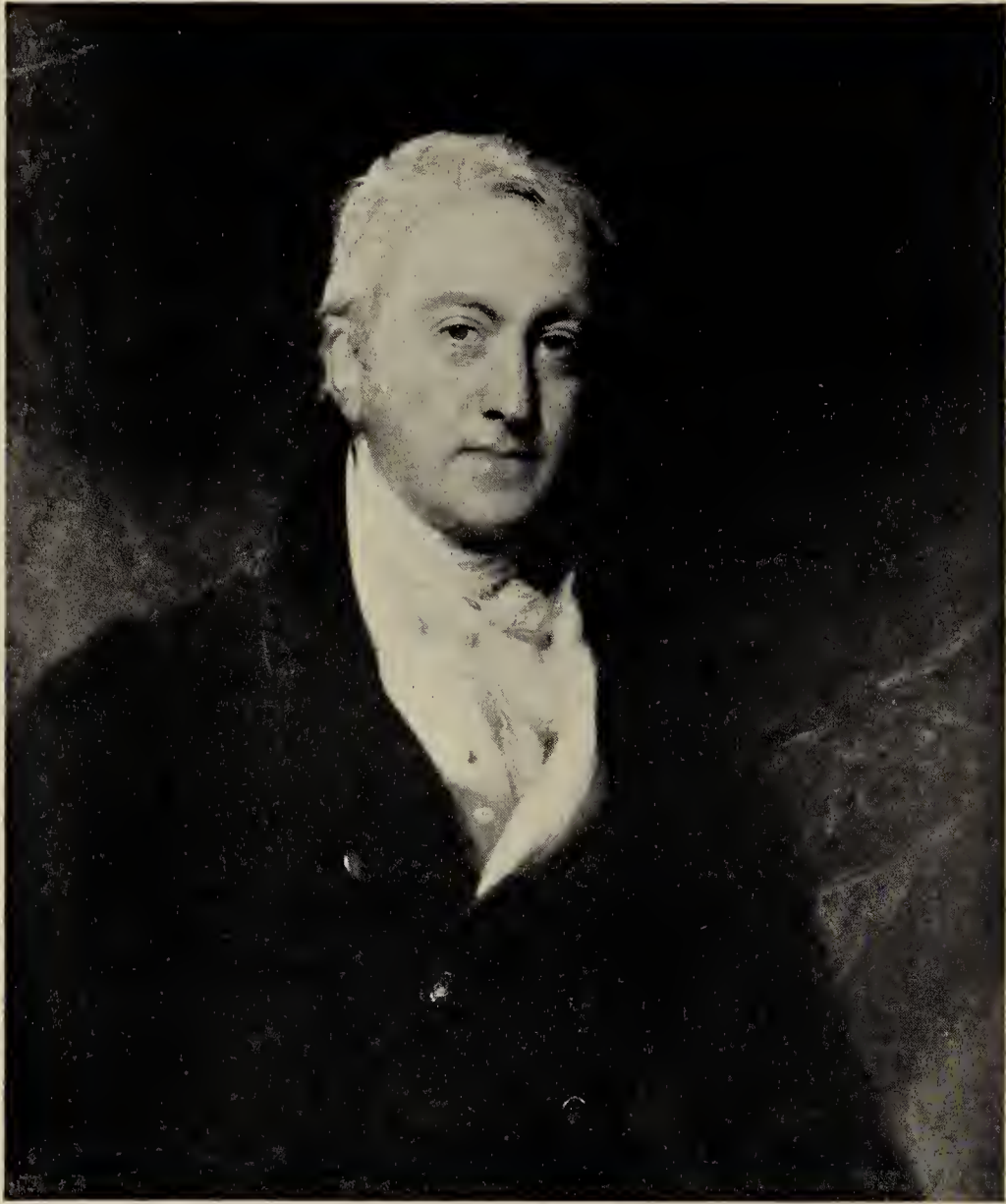
SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE

added footnotes later, as indicated above, for he never lost his interest in the landscape as portrayed by the nineteenth century artists; but to make his assemblage a more well-rounded one he turned his attention chiefly to earlier artists.

Among the followers of Rembrandt he found masters of distinction, worthy of his attention. Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, an able technician, clever, facile, readily followed the inspiration of his teacher. His *Magnanimity of Scipio*, an elaborate composition, shows the influence of Rembrandt, and, notably in the head and hands of the kneeling figure, a close approach to his technique.

Girl at Window by Ferdinand Bol is quite reminiscent of Rembrandt in the effective use of light and shade. The head and shoulders, in full light, stand out against the rich depth of

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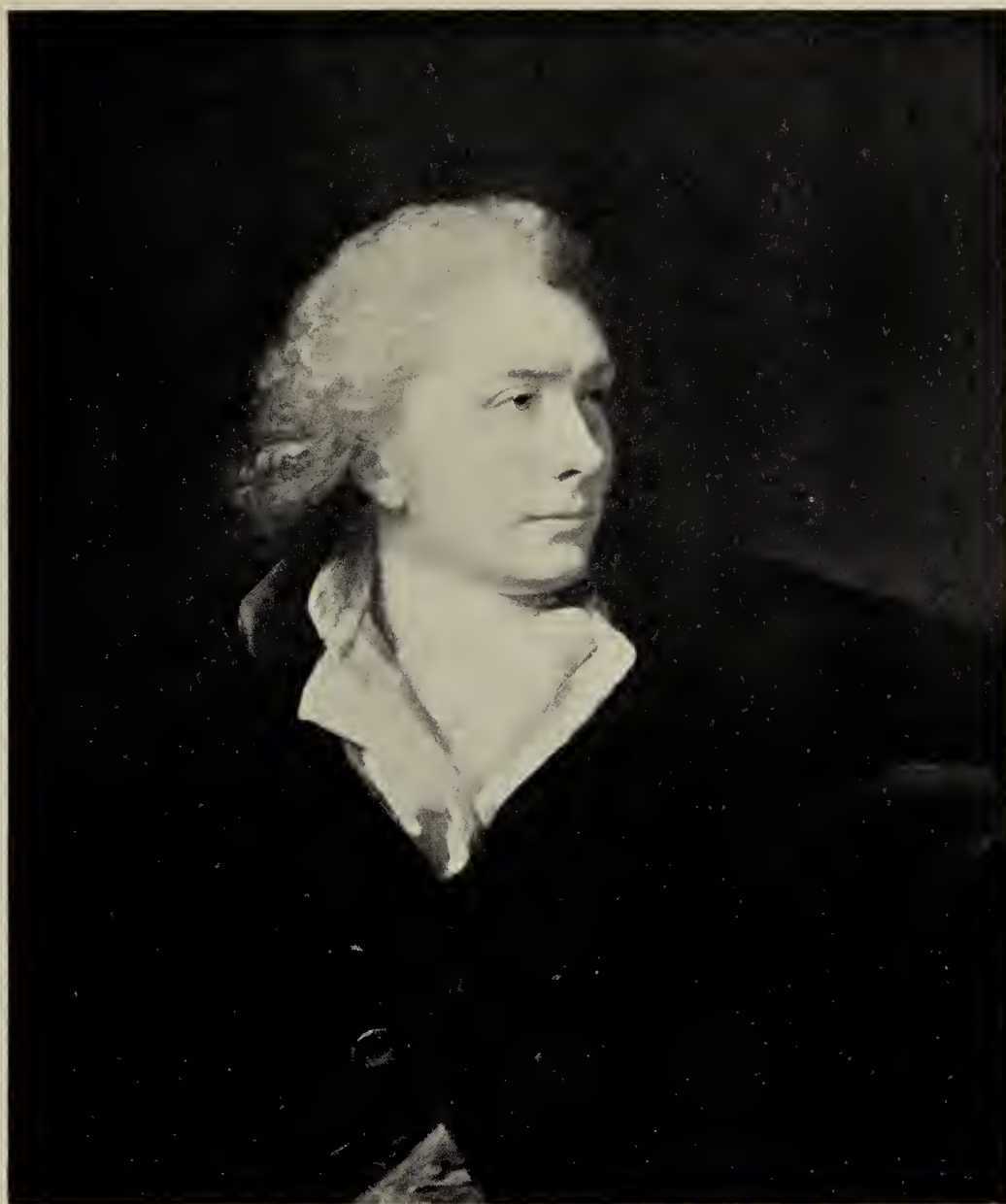


SIR THOMAS FRANKLAND

SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE

the interior. The freshness and youth of the subject contribute their beauty and the handling of the elaborate detail gives evidence of the competence of the painter.

Among the earlier masters of Holland, Mr. Secor sought the precursors of the landscapists of the nineteenth century, found them in Van Goyen, Van der Neer and Ruisdael. Of them Van Goyen brought first into Dutch art the individualized landscape, the portraiture of the countryside, which was later to become a fetish with the artists of that country. Harbor View is typical of him and of most who came after him in predominance of sky, breadth of view, conditioned, no doubt, by the flatness of the country. The grouping of the clouds, the placing of boats and



THOMAS CUSHING

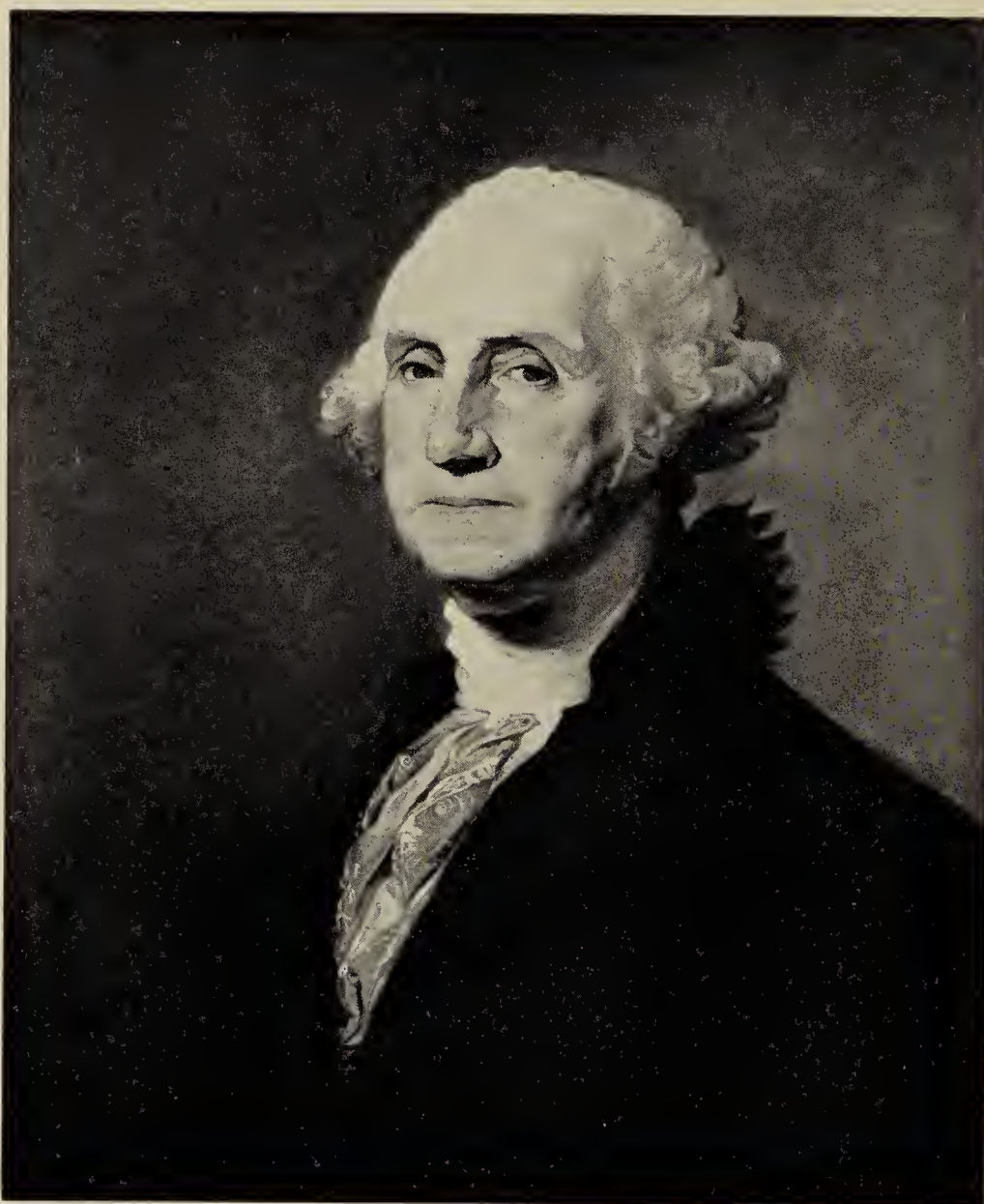
JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY

sails provide interest in the composition. Transparency of color gives a luminosity faithful to the atmosphere of the country.

Ruisdael, influenced by Van Goyen, became the preeminent landscapist of Holland. He concentrated upon the majestic, monumental scene, painting the grandeur of mountain and waterfall, natural elements foreign to his country, rearranged to the point of the imaginative. His Landscape in the Secor collection introduces in pleasing juxtaposition the turbulent waterfall and the placid pool, the rugged mountain and the sheltering house, the blasted tree and the resting travellers.

The English school attracted Mr. Secor's attention and from it he secured a distinguished representation. His portrait of

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GEORGE WASHINGTON

GILBERT STUART

The Honorable Mrs. Watson by Sir Joshua Reynolds was one of the first paintings chosen anywhere in the country for the Century of Progress Exhibition at the Chicago Art Institute in 1933. A carefully studied yet simple and direct composition, this work embodies the best features of eighteenth century portraiture. Undoubtedly a good likeness, not unflattering, it is executed with dash and freedom. Its happy blending of realism and decorative style marks it as one of Reynolds' rare masterpieces.

Thomas Gainsborough was landscapist by choice, portraitist through necessity. In both fields he exhibited great mastery, and in both he is well represented in the Secor collection. The portrait

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of Lady Frederick Campbell is typical of his formal, decorative style of feminine representation. Her features are smoothly and carefully modelled, the accessories broadly painted. The Market Cart has the free handling, loose, confident brushstroke and daring use of color that point toward the development of Constable and all modern landscape. Horses, cart and figures, the dog and child drinking from the brook, exhibit the most skilful handling. In freedom and breadth of technique this canvas need not bow to even the most modern.

Romney, Raeburn, Hoppner, Wilkie and Lawrence have made their notable contributions to the collection. The Countess of Arundell by the last named is executed in the finished technique for which he is famed. The lady's aristocratic bearing and poise, which Lawrence has not minimized, set against a broadly suggested background of landscape and sky, give the picture great distinction. In contrast, Lawrence's Sir Thomas Frankland shows unexpected realism, utmost simplicity of arrangement. The strongly modelled face bespeaks the character of the man, and evidences the artist's equal abilities to cope with feminine grace and masculine vigor.

At the same time that Reynolds, Gainsborough and Lawrence were flourishing in the mother country, Colonial America was beginning to produce artists. Copley, Stuart and West, drawn by the greater opportunities in a more settled civilization, even left our shores, daring to compete with the already established masters in England.

In the Secor collection two outstanding works show well the relationship between the portraiture of the two countries. Copley, firstborn of native American painters, self-taught, after having won success and an established place for himself in this country, set out for London in 1774. Pictures by him had long since received favorable reception in the exhibitions of the Society of Artists of Great Britain. He was not long in overcoming the tendencies to dry color, rigid pose, tight drawing which he had shown in America. The portrait of Thomas Cushing, broad in concept, free in execution, fresh and vital, gives evidence that he had learned well the lessons which England had to teach, proclaims the high order of his artistic ability. It is the equal of many a Hoppner, Raeburn, Romney, or Lawrence, superior to many another of the lesser works by these and even more notable artists.

Gilbert Stuart likewise was in England during the American revolution. When quite young he had been taken to Scotland to study, had gone abroad again in 1775, and soon thereafter had become pupil and assistant of Benjamin West. Later he spent

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five years in Ireland, then returned to America, drawn, it is said, by an irresistible desire to do the portrait of George Washington. He had sittings from him for three paintings each substantially different from the other. From all, and especially the third, which Stuart retained unfinished in his studio, he did many replicas. One of the best of these it was Mr. Secor's good fortune to secure as the crowning glory of his early American section. Never having suffered from cleaning and restoration as have so many, it retains all of the freshness and brilliancy which the artist imparted to it. The crisp modelling, the transparency of the shadows, the easy technique, the understanding of character found in this canvas amply demonstrate Stuart's right to first rank among the early American painters, and to high rating even among his English contemporaries.

The space at our disposal permits of the mention and illustration of but a few of the gems which grace the walls of the Secor Galleries in the Toledo Museum. Most of the pictures so generously shared with the community by their owner have been discussed in previous issues of the Museum News. Others will appear from time to time in the future. The choice which we have made for this article has been inspired primarily by the desire to indicate the range of the collection and its comprehensive character. Secondly subconscious preferences, devolving from an hour spent with Mr. Secor discussing a certain picture, or the fleeting recollection of one of his anecdotes of the acquisition of another, has colored the selection. Others might equally well have been chosen, both for making the point and for their intrinsic worth.

Mr. Secor had one primary test which he applied to the selection of every picture. Was it pleasing to the eye? Did its contemplation give enjoyment? If not, no matter how famous the artist or distinguished the picture, he had little interest in it. Through years of study, not of tomes written about them, but of pictures themselves, he formed high standards of quality by which he tested each picture which was to remain in his collection. Many a picture he bought, lived with, studied,—and others by the same artist and by others akin to him. When he found a finer example, or another work which would better fit into his scheme, he did not hesitate to exchange for the better. As a result of his study, comparison, rejection and final acceptance, his collection as it stands today maintains a high standard of excellence, and offers as strong testimony to his connoisseurship as his gift of it pays tribute to his humanity, his generosity and his concern for the people of the community in which he so long lived.